

it. That is money that should be going to educate children, feed them, house them, to deal with family security and emergencies and savings. That is the better use of these resources.

I believe that meaningful tax reduction in an economy of this size, with these emerging surpluses, can allow for dramatic tax reduction on this scale.

Senator BREAUX has offered a meaningful beginning to writing that tax reduction and providing that relief. I am proud to join with him.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from New Jersey once again for a powerful and persuasive presentation.

Mr. President, I ask the Senator from Connecticut if he seeks time.

Mr. DODD. I do, Mr. President.

Mr. CONRAD. I yield 10 minutes to the Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, my amendment is currently being crafted, and I have been in discussion with the distinguished chairman of the Budget Committee. I will explain what the amendment is and then I will offer it shortly.

I will be offering this amendment on behalf of myself and several of my colleagues: Senators WELLSTONE, CLINTON, BINGAMAN, CORZINE, MURRAY, LANDRIEU, LINCOLN, ROCKEFELLER, DAYTON, and DURBIN.

This amendment ensures that critical children's programs will be protected from harmful cuts. President Bush, as we all know, campaigned on the promise to leave no child behind. If we heard it once, we heard it a thousand times during the campaign. Those of us who took this President at his word were dismayed, to put it mildly, by the news 2 weeks ago that he intends to pay for the tax cut by cutting programs affecting children's health, children's hospitals, child care, and child abuse prevention treatment programs.

His actions certainly beg the question: When he pledged to leave no child behind, which children did he mean? Not abused and neglected children apparently because he would cut funding for child abuse by 18 percent.

Yesterday I attended a wonderful program sponsored by Child Help USA, a national group supporting programs to eliminate child abuse in this country. I was pleased to have the opportunity to participate in the program. The luncheon was co-hosted by the distinguished wife of our majority leader and my wife. We had speakers from the House and the Senate, as well as many experts from across the country who are involved in child abuse prevention. Groups like Child Help USA, serving the needs of abused and neglected children throughout the nation, deserve our utmost support. The amendment that I offer today is a step in the direction of providing that support.

What we are doing with this amendment is seeing to it that the level of

funding for child abuse at the very least remains the same and we do not have an 18-percent cut in that program, as called for in President Bush's budget.

More than 800,000 children are the victims of child abuse each year. Certainly an 18-percent cut in that program can be devastating for these very worthwhile efforts.

Children's hospitals is a second issue addressed by this amendment. These hospitals train more than 25 percent of our Nation's pediatricians and more than 50 percent of the country's pediatric specialists. A \$35 million cut in that program which trains pediatricians and pediatric specialists is surely a move in the wrong direction. The most critically ill children in our country are at these children's hospitals, and seeing to it they get the proper assistance and support is critically important.

The third issue addressed by my amendment is the restoration of the \$20 million cut in the early learning programs contained in President Bush's budget. These early learning programs were sponsored by our colleague from Alaska, Senator STEVENS, and our colleague from Massachusetts, Senator KENNEDY. I believe the early learning program is certainly worthwhile, and it has to be restored. My amendment will restore this cut.

Lastly, as many of my colleagues know, child care is a very important program to our nation's children and families. Last year, this body, along with the other body, increased funding for child care. Under the President's proposal, child care would be cut by \$200 million which is a major step in the wrong direction. Given the needs of children who are on waiting lists for child care and of working families who need help in paying for the cost of child care, child care funding is vitally important. Mr. President, in Texas, 41,000 children are on the waiting list for child care assistance, in Florida, 44,000; Mississippi, 15,000; 16,000 in Massachusetts; 14,000 in North Carolina. Yet if the proposed cuts went into place, 60,000 more families with young children and toddlers would be denied child care assistance under the child care development block grant that was authored by my colleague from Utah, Senator HATCH, and myself. We think the restoration to present levels of funding is the very least we can do as we enter the 21st century with the established need for well-trained pediatricians, good early learning programs, adequately dealing with child abuse, and providing at least the same level of funding for child care assistance in this country.

We are told all the reasons we need to have a tax cut of this size, but to do that, it seems to me, the cost of cutting into programs for the most needy people in our society—children in children's hospitals, children who are abused, children who need early learning programs—is too high a price to

pay for tax relief. To say we cannot provide some reduction in that tax cut, where the bulk of it is still going to those who can afford these programs the most, to provide some assistance to these children and these families is something for which this body I believe does not want to be on record.

This is not an increase. I stress to my colleagues, I am not asking for that. I will, however, at some point. Today all I am asking for is the restoration of last year's funding levels. That is all—child abuse, child care, and pediatric care, along with early learning programs that Senator STEVENS and Senator Kennedy have championed, do not deserve these cuts. All I am asking for with this amendment is that we—at the very minimum—provide the same level of funding we provided just last year. While I surely support adding to these levels, and will work toward boosting funding as we move into the appropriation's process, the amendment I offer today simply restores cuts to these vital programs contained in President Bush's budget. Don't make cuts in these programs at the same time we are offering a substantial tax break for those I know who like it, but many of them would agree that their money could be better invested in programs that serve vulnerable children and families.

I ask my colleagues to support this amendment.

I yield 1 minute to my colleague from Minnesota.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Connecticut for his amendment. I thank him for his passion for children. I am very proud to be an original cosponsor of this amendment. I thank my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, if indeed they support this amendment. To cut funding for a program that would help with prevention of child abuse, to cut funding for child care, little children, to cut funding for training for doctors at some of our children's hospitals where you have some of the sickest children is no way to realize the goal of leaving no child behind.

This amendment restores funding. There will be a number of Senators fighting for more funding for investment in children, especially prekindergarten, little children. This is a good amendment. I thank my colleague from Connecticut. I am proud to be a supporter.

Mr. DODD. We are talking about a very modest amount of money. We Members have been talking about billions of dollars yesterday and today. This amendment does not even get near the \$1 billion figure. While we regularly talk of billions and trillion of dollars around here as if they don't count much, they surely count if you have a child in a children's hospital needing help, if you are a parent trying to afford child care and you are working, if you have seen what happens to children that are abused. The millions of dollars that this amendment will restore, while not the billions we usually